



Melissa Cross, third from left, is pictured with the McAleer's Office Furniture team. Photo by Dawn Finch Photography

## HOW MCALEER'S KEEPS CUSTOMERS HAPPY AND LOYAL

When Jim McAleer founded **McAleer's Office Furniture** in the late 1970s, he focused on the sort of products that would make impressive showrooms – something the company continues to do throughout its stores in Mobile and Pensacola today.

Now operated by Jim's daughter, **Melissa Cross**, and son, **David McAleer**, McAleer's is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Online competition has been fierce for years, Cross acknowledges, so the company has embraced it with a significant online presence. But what sets McAleer's apart from those elsewhere in the United States and beyond is its service and fully stocked showrooms.

"Our main driving principle is to provide new and used quality office furniture at the lowest price possible," Cross said. "What makes us very competitive, especially today, is that we've always kept nearly \$1 million worth of product in stock at any given time."

Expedited delivery, free assembly and local support are keys to keeping McAleer's clients happy and loyal, she says. One of seven children of founders Jim and Camilla McAleer, Cross said she never intended to run the family business. But she ended up living in Dallas and working in the office furniture manufacturing industry with customers in large markets throughout the western United States.

When her dad started thinking about retirement, many in the family agreed she was a natural successor – an idea she's come to embrace since joining the company as president in 2012.

Cross has brought a leadership style rooted in mentorship and talent development, helping the company hone its "power of one" philosophy, where a representative takes care of his or her client from the first handshake to project completion, including design, management, procurement and project oversight.

“They’re going to see every transaction through to the very end, which makes the process so much better and easier,” Cross said. She currently has 20 employees between Mobile and Pensacola and is looking to expand.

A huge fan of the University of South Alabama’s RAMP mentorship program, Cross said participating in the U.S. Small Business Administration’s seven month Emerging Leaders course was a huge benefit to McAleer’s as a company. For the second year in a row, Cross is the chairwoman of the Chamber Chase resource development and membership campaign.

She is so passionate about the Mobile Area Chamber that she says it almost feels like her second job.

“Not every chamber is five-star like ours, and not every chamber has an economic development department,” she says. “I deeply believe in what the Chamber does, and the programs they offer for small business are just amazing.”



Photo by Dawn Finch Photography

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